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NFAC #046/81

6 January 1981

SUBJECT : Quo Vadis the Strategic Warning Staff (U)

2. I would like to meet at 1400 on Wednesday, 21 January, in Room 5G00, CIA headquarters to finalize the paper. (U)


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I. Background: The Strategic Warning Staff (SWS) was established in 1974 as a replacement for the National Indications Center. It is manned jointly by the agencies of the Intelligence Community, located in the National Military Intelligence Center, Pentagon, and chaired by a CIA officer. DCID 1/5, National Intelligence Warning, placed the SWS under the supervision of the NIO/Warning. The staff personnel allowance presently stands at twelve professionals and five clericals.

In February 1979, the NIO/W prepared a paper for the DCI which explored potential roles for the SWS. These included:

-- Option A: A larger SWS: Under this option the SWS would be increased to 20 professionals and 8 clericals. Such a staff would maintain a working discipline by issuing a daily national-level warning report (emphasis added). Its report in normal periods would be primarily a device for maintaining dialogue and warning consciousness in and with the Community in Washington and the field. In major crisis, however, it would serve as a vehicle for periodic reporting to policy officers. (emphasis added). Manning to this level would permit the Director/SWS to issue such a report without becoming consumed by routine. His analysts would have time to think and to bring their expertise to bear on Community analyses, and the staff would be strong enough to maintain around-the-clock manning in crisis without the augmentation that could be had only with great difficulty in such periods. At the same time, the staff could make a serious contribution to an inter-Agency research program.

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Five-six analysts working full-time on important questions would provide the core around which a coherent program could be built.

-- Option B: SWS at Its Present Strength. With 11 professionals and 6 clericals, SWS could either issue a daily report as in Option A or do this weekly and supply some working manpower for research. Crisis operations would require augmentation.

-- Option C: Reduce Present Strength by Three. Under this option SWS manning would be reduced by the two professionals and one clerical needed to provide the NIO with a staff of three assistants and two clericals.

-- Option D: A Sharply Curtailed SWS. Option D would add two more professionals to the NIO's staff, raising its strength to eight, including the NIO/W. There would be an SWS of perhaps six, four professionals and two clerical, reducing total manpower by 30 percent. At this level the SWS could synthesize agency contributions and probably encourage a dialogue between Washington and the field. Any larger analytic or "conscience" role would have to be assumed by appropriate NIOs.

-- Option E: No SWS. Further reduction in manning would make maintenance of a separate SWS inefficient. This option

would therefore further augment the NIO/W staff by two more professionals and a clerical for a total of eleven. These positions would provide the nucleus for a strong research effort and provide some additional backup to the NIOs responsible for strategic warning.

-- Option F: No Special Attention to Strategic Warning.

This would not only eliminate SWS but somewhat reduce NIO/W's staff from that in Option E. He would have an A/NIO, three officers responsible for plumbing, systems, budget, and support to the NIOs, and two clericals, for a total of seven, including the NIO/W himself.

The DCI approved option C, however the transfer of two professionals and a clerical from the SWS to the NIO/W office was never accomplished.

DCID 1/5 delineates responsibilities for the NIO/W, the NIOs, and the SWS.

Relevant portions follow:

The NIO/W is charged to advise and assist the Director and Deputy Director of Central Intelligence on all matters relating to warning, to coordinate national intelligence warning activities, and to serve as a focal point for warning in the Community. For organizational purposes, he will be located in the National Foreign Assessment Center. He will to the maximum extent rely on existing organizations in carrying out his duties. The responsibilities of the National Intelligence Officer for Warning are:

- i. To oversee analysis of intelligence from all sources which might provide warning. In particular, he should be alert to alternate interpretations within the Community and assess these with a view to the need for issuance of warning. He should encourage consultation and substantive discussion at all levels of the Community.
- ii. To recommend to the Director or Deputy Director of Central Intelligence the issuance of warning to the President and National Security Council, and to ensure the dissemination of such warning within and by the organizations of the Intelligence Community. When time is of the essence, the National Intelligence Officer may issue such warning directly to the President and the National Security Council with concurrent dissemination to the Director and Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and senior officers of the Intelligence Community.
- iii. To advise the Deputy Director for Collection Tasking and Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment on appropriate Community response to developing warning situations.
- iv. To develop plans and procedures for support of the Director of Central Intelligence in crisis situations.
- v. To support the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and the National Foreign Intelligence Board on warning matters.
- vi. To chair the Warning Working Group.
- vii. To oversee the warning activities of the National Intelligence Officers.
- viii. To supervise the Strategic Warning Staff.
- ix. To arrange for intelligence research and production with respect to strategic warning.

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x. To develop a warning consciousness and discipline throughout the Community.

xi. To seek improvements in methodologies and procedures for warning, including communications and dissemination of information.

xii. To arrange with appropriate organizations of the government for provision to the National Intelligence Officer for Warning and the Strategic Warning Staff of the information they need to carry out their mission.

xiii. To promote improved analyst training in indications and warning techniques and in other analytic techniques that might contribute to improved warning.

xiv. To advise the Deputy for Collection Tasking and the Deputy for Research Management, as appropriate, on warning activities that relate to their responsibilities.

The National Intelligence Officers are specifically charged with substantive responsibility for warning in their respective fields. They will conduct Communitywide reviews at least monthly of situations potentially requiring issuance of warning, and will keep the Director of Central Intelligence advised of the results, in consultation with the National Intelligence Officer for Warning. They will be continually alert to the need for immediate issuance of warning.

The Strategic Warning Staff will be under the supervision of the National Intelligence Officer for Warning. Its principal functions are to

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assist him in his responsibilities with respect to strategic warning and to conduct research with respect thereto. It may also engage in other warning related activities within the Intelligence Community with the concurrence of the National Intelligence Officer for Warning.

II. The Evolution: The NIO/Warning position was established in October, 1978 to provide a single point of accountability for warning at the National level. Prior to that time, emphasis had been on "strategic warning",\* and that flavor carried over to the new organization. Most assumed the NIO/W would continue to observe precedence and devote most of his attention to the threat of hostilities involving US military forces (by implication--USSR, North Korea, or China). A trend had already started, however, which was to broaden the scope of warning attention considerably.\*\* Over time, there had been a gradual realization that most "intelligence warning failures" had had nothing to do with the use of military force against US troops, ships, or aircraft, nor had they involved the use of force by the USSR, North Korea, or China. In fact, those analysts who devoted most of their efforts to "strategic warning" were seen by some to be outside the mainstream--sitting around waiting for World War III was a phrase heard not infrequently. The Community was already moving from an emphasis on the more restrictive strategic warning to the broader context of avoiding surprise.

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\*DCID 1/5 defines strategic warning as "intelligence information or intelligence regarding the threat of the initiation of hostilities against the US or in which US forces may become involved; it may be received at any time prior to the initiation of hostilities. It does not include tactical warning."

\*\*DCID 1/5 defines warning as "those measures taken, and the intelligence information produced, by the intelligence Community to avoid surprise to the President, the NSC, and the Armed Forces of the United States by foreign events of major importance to the security of the United States. It includes strategic, but not tactical warning."



Concurrently, the NIOs were assuming their revitalized warning roles. The Alert memorandum was revived as the principal national level warning vehicle. Potential crises in Iran, Pakistan, Egypt/Libya, Nicaragua, El Salvador, etc. became the subjects of Alert Memoranda whose production was chaired by the responsible area NIO in concert with the NIO/W. Potential crises, and their warning implications, were judged important as a result of their impact on US policy interests. The old strategic warning-imminent hostilities concept was not abandoned, nor was it deemphasized. Rather, it was subsumed by a broader warning context.

Meanwhile, our concept of the Strategic Warning Staff's mission lagged the realities evolving in the Community. The SWS mission had been extrapolated from its previous role--Big W, or strategic warning concerning the USSR, North Korea, and China. Provisions had been made to broaden their area of interest at the discretion of the NIO/W, but this was envisioned as an infrequent, ad hoc occurrence. The Director of the SWS was charged to concentrate on the larger problems threatening general war.

The Chinese-Vietnamese imbroglio, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Polish crisis with its potential for Soviet intervention served to keep the Staff occupied through 1979 and 1980. At the same time, however, the NIO for Warning staff of two was hard pressed to keep up with the rest of the world. As the NIO for Warning assumed his role as warning conscience to the regional NIOs and the DCI, it became apparent that he needed more help in areas other than strategic warning.

III. The Problem: No one disagrees that the Community needs a warning conscience, and DCID 1/5 charges the NIO/W with that task. While

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the SWS has supported him admirably with respect to the Soviet Union and China, they have done little or nothing in other areas. Yet twenty four of the thirty one Alert Memoranda issued since the establishment of the NIO for Warning have been concerned with other areas. The present NIO/W staff of two professionals is just not enough.

In early 1979 the DCI decided to leave the SWS in the Pentagon for various reasons not the least of which were historical. As the warning responsibility has shifted to the NIOs at Langley, it has become increasingly difficult to do business via the grey telephone and the Blue bird shuttle bus. As a result, the ability of the Staff to effectively support the NIO for Warning (and the other NIOs) has suffered.

IV. The Solution: There are five major elements to be considered in establishing a revitalized, pertinent SWS.

-- Director Control by the NIO for Warning

We recommend eliminating the SWS as a separate, semi-autonomous body, and replacing it with an enlarged NIO/W staff consisting of six officers; two from CIA, two from DIA, and one each from NSA and State. One existing SWS slot should be converted to a permanent State billet against which an officer could be charged. Consideration should be given to retaining an additional CIA slot as a liaison to the DIA warning office.

-- Expansion of Mission: The NIO/W's area of interest and responsibility is worldwide. If his staff is augmented as we recommend, emphasis should be on selecting officers with broad, general experience who are well schooled in the warning discipline.

The NIO/W staff should review community intelligence production to ensure it adequately treats the warning aspects, provide aggressive skepticism in the face of too comfortable an acceptance of the conventional wisdom, and research longer term matters of warning significance worldwide.

-- Access to Community Resources: Implicit in the arrangement we recommend is broad access to community analytical resources. This should be facilitated by the manning recommended above, with representation by CIA, DIA, NSA, and State. The NIO/W should, like the other NIOs, tap Community resources for assistance when it is needed.

-- Access to the NIO/W and NIOs: The need for effective communication between the NIO/W, NIO/W staff, and the geographic NIOs dictates location of the staff at Langley.

-- Access to Customers: The NIO/W should publish, either routinely or aperiodically, for the consumption of the intelligence community. Subjects should include alternative hypothesis and research in depth on warning matters. In times of impending crisis, the NIO/W should have the option of expanding distribution to include the policy community.

V. Conclusion: In summary then, we recommend replacing the SWS with an NIO/W staff of six professionals drawn from the Community and located at Langley whose function would be to support the NIO/W in publishing alternative hypotheses on budding crises and in-depth research papers

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on warning issues. Consideration should also be given to providing an NIO/W liaison officer to the DIA warning office.

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